

RE: 1115 Waiver Concept Paper

My comments will primarily focus on Community Health Workers in Pathway 4: Workforce; 4C- Other workforce training.

The Chicago CHW Local Network appreciates the idea of investing resources in training and preparing healthcare providers to work on teams to assure that overall health improvement goals are achieved in addition to providing appropriate clinical care. We want to caution against using “community health workers” and “healthcare providers” in the same sentence.

According to the American Public Health Association, community health workers (CHWs) are:

“frontline public health workers who are trusted members of and/or have an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the CHW to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A CHW also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support and advocacy.”

CHWs are non-clinical healthcare workers who share socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity with the communities they serve. These unique qualities make them an asset to a healthcare team. By sharing the same language, culture, race, socioeconomic status with their communities, CHWs can gather information from patients and report back to the healthcare team, doctor/nurse/social worker/etc. information that clinical staff could not obtain through a hospital or clinical visit.

Devoting resources to educating and training the healthcare workforce, including CHWs, would expand capacity and help prepare Illinois to deal with the growing number of people receiving healthcare coverage. Education and training resources should not only be directed at educational institutions but include employers (for-profit and non-profit) and social/community-based organizations who are currently educating and training CHWs.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Respectively submitted by:

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